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Welch tour makes stop in Mississippi

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The President of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) paid a visit to Mississippi September 9 to ask the state's Baptists to help baptize one million new believers in a one-year period beginning in June 2005.

Accomplishing that task will mean Southern Baptists must more than double their present annual rate of baptisms, said Bobby Welch, pastor of First Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., and first-term SBC president.

"We can do better. We can routinely baptize one million people each year, and we should," he said during his Everyone Can Kingdom Challenge bus tour stop at the Northpark Campus of Colonial Heights Church in Ridgeland.

Welch's visit was coincidentally the first official event held in Colonial Heights Church's brand new Northpark Campus, where the smell of fresh paint and the sounds of hammers and drills filled the air. Services at the Jackson-based church's satellite facility began on the following Sunday.

Welch told the crowd gathered to meet him that the attacks suffered by America on September 11, 2001, caused him to refocus



BAPTISM CHALLENGE — Participants in the Mississippi stop of the Everyone Can Kingdom Challenge bus tour pose for a group photo on September 9 outside the Northpark campus of Colonial Heights Church in Ridgeland. Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Bobby Welch, pastor of First Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., is using the 50-state bus tour to promote his SBC-wide goal of one million baptisms between June 2005 and June 2006. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

STAYING FOCUSED — Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch, speaking September 9 at the Northpark Campus of Colonial Heights Church in Ridgeland, uses an old blinders harness to emphasize the importance of Southern Baptists staying focused on the goal of winning the world to Christ. On the inside of one blinder is written the word, "Seek," Welch said, while the other blinder has the word, "Save." (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



on the urgency of spreading the Gospel to people in need of its lifesaving message.

"I could not believe people were jumping from those buildings (the World Trade Center towers in New York City). We know they crashed and they died. I wondered, 'Where did their souls land — heaven or hell?' I wondered if they had a conversation with Christ that morning," he said.

Quoting from the brochure handed out to participants, Welch explained The Everyone Can Kingdom Challenge consists of six points that Southern Baptists should pledge to accomplish:

- Train and equip themselves and others.
- Witness and win others to Christ.
- Help others understand the importance of believer's baptism.
- Apply biblical teachings of stewardship.
- Become personally involved in Vacation Bible School to reach children and their parents.
- Start new Sunday School classes and new churches.

Before departing for the Louisiana stop on his 50-state bus tour, Welch led 15 teams on a door-to-door witnessing campaign in the neighborhoods around the new Colonial Heights Church facility. Two professions of faith were recorded, along with the discovery of a number of prospects for the church.

"We considered it a great honor to have Bobby come to our church. Not only were we excited to host the event, but this was the first service in our new Northpark campus. What Bobby communicated concerning evangelism being the priority for our convention was the perfect message for our members and community to hear about Colonial Heights.

Our desire is to invite everyday people to experience Christ in every way. I think he got that point across clearly," said Colonial Heights Church Pastor Mark Anderson.

"I believe his message was very timely because Southern Baptists have not seen any significant increase in baptisms the past four or five years. I do believe that if everyone who claims to be a Christian makes the effort in some way to share their faith, we would see a tremendous increase in people being reached for Christ.

"My hope and prayer for Colonial Heights and the SBC is that we will respond to God's desire that every Christian be a Great Commission Christian. We need revival and a spiritual awakening. I don't say that lightly," Anderson added.

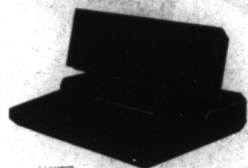
Mississippi Baptist Convention President Gene Henderson, pastor of First Church, Brandon, attended the Colonial Heights event and recalled the days when he and Welch were in seminary together.

"He was enthusiastic and on fire for God then just as he is now. I was very impressed with the passion he has for reaching the masses who do not know Christ. The goal of baptizing one million is challenging but achievable. We must be intentional if we are ever going to reach a million in one year. I believe like Bobby — if we ever reach that level we will never go back to where we were before," he said.

Welch's bus tour began August 29 at First Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., and will end on October 7 at Waikoloa Church in Waikoloa, Hawaii. The tour will involve 70 stops and cover more than 20,000 miles.

For more information, visit the web sites: <http://www.sbc.net/bustour/>, and www.sbc Baptist Press.org.

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Dangerous conversations

Christina Long was a bright-eyed sixth-grader, cheerleader, and honor student at her school in Danbury, Connecticut. In 2002 she died in the back seat of a car in a shopping mall parking lot, strangled while having sex with a 25-year-old stranger she met on the Internet.

A check of her home computer after she died revealed that for at least the last 12-18 months, she had been frequently having sex with strangers she met on the Internet.

Social workers could probably point to a number of factors that led to Christina's risky behavior, including absent drug-addicted parents and other elements of a lonely and rootless lifestyle, even though she was living under the care of a dotting aunt at the time of her death. Too, young people's lack of experience often leads them to think that such a violent, tragic death could never befall them.

Whatever Christina's problems that led to her acting out sexually, there was apparently no shortage of adult pedophiles lurking on the Internet and ready to take advantage of an unassuming 12-year-old child. That fact is almost as disturbing as Christina's murder.

NBC newsmagazine Dateline recently broadcast an unsettling undercover investigation into the dark world of these technologically-sophisticated child molesters and their willingness to violate any minor on which they can get their hands. No child is safe. It may have always been that way, but the Internet has certainly streamlined the process and opened up a whole new field of perversion and predation.

With the help of an online child protection/vigilante group called Perverted Justice, Dateline NBC reporter Chris Hansen revealed that many perverts utilize youth and teen chat rooms to lure children into one-on-one instant mes-

sage conversations, where they send pornographic photos of themselves and ask the children to do the same. Thinking that he was chatting on line with a 13-year-old girl who was actually a Perverted Justice adult volunteer, a New York City firefighter with a video camera connected to his computer exposed himself and committed a sex act that cannot be described in further detail on the pages of this publication.

Worse still, 18 men (including the fireman) showed up for sex with the fake 13-year-old girl at a house Dateline had rigged with hidden cameras. They may have thought they were coming to a child's house to have sex with her, but what they got was a lot of embarrassment on national television.

Many of the men were married and had children. At least one had a history of mental illness. What they all had in common was a compulsion that overrode all natural caution and led them to risk being caught red-handed or, worse still, possibly arrested and sentenced to jail time.

Parents, here's a thought that should keep you awake at night: In real-life situations that happen every day in every part of the country, unassuming children not wise to ways of the world are being persuaded over the Internet to allow total strangers into their homes without parents even knowing that perverts, burglars, and mentally ill pedophiles are taking advantage of their chil-

AFTER THE CONFUSING DARKNESS OF WORLDLY MEDIA AND A CULTURE WITHOUT A CLUE, THEY FINALLY TURNED TOWARD THE LITTLE CHURCH ON THE HILL. SUDDENLY, A LIGHT DAWNED....



dren and roaming freely about their house.

While there are no perfect ways to protect children from these people, there are many common-sense approaches to minimizing the risk. A good place to start learning those approaches is <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3078811/>.

The Internet has revolutionized almost every aspect of our lives, and there's no turning back now. The future holds great potential, and great risks. Let's not be stupid with our children.

GUEST OPINION:



A house united

By Claude Thomas, pastor
First Church, Euless, Texas

Jesus said, a house divided will not stand (Matthew 12:25).

Luke uses a Greek word to describe the unity of the early church, and it is the exact antithesis of Jesus' picture of a divided house. It is the word "fellowship," the Greek word koinonia.

In real life, this word connotes "togetherness" and means Christians gather and share about life and God, share their possessions and share God's impact on our lives. In other words, koinonia is not meaningless jargon; it is something real.

When koinonia is real, it results in spiritual activities (prayer and the Lord's Supper) but can also be as simple as eating together or giving to someone in need of something tangible: a car, clothes, food or a place to live (look at Acts 2:45; Acts 4:32-37).

What brought these early Christians together? What enables the church to be united in koinonia? It is very simple to say, but most profound.

Peter told the crowd "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:41). And in Acts 2:38, Peter said, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Only the following unites the church: the name of Jesus Christ, His forgiveness of sins and the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).

How does Christ's name thus unify us, bringing us together toward koinonia?

It's kind of like this: In the closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Greece, America watched as Mia Hamm

carried the American flag. All of America united, symbolically, under the flag. The flag represents America, Americans and the freedom and opportunity America experiences.

Great pride. Emotion. Great feeling. And she represented America well when she carried the flag that day. But she represented America best when she actually participated in the Games.

What unites Christians together? The banner, the name of Jesus. But He's not just a flag that we wave. He is our Savior, our deliverer, the one who brings us close to God. He is our example and our model. We make Him proud when we participate in following Him.

Only the name of Jesus unites Christians. When we are devoted to Him, repentant and participating in the life He gives through the Holy Spirit, divisions will fall. Only in His name do we discover koinonia, whatever our denomination. Only in the name of Christ will we impact our culture for Him.

Thomas recently announced his resignation to become chaplain at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

Vietnam rejects religious persecution label

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The communist government of Vietnam responded angrily Sept. 20 to its designation as a "country of particular concern" by the U.S. State Department.

In a statement issued from Hanoi, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the State Department's findings on religious persecution in the Southeast Asian country as "erroneous." Foreign Minister Nguyen De Nien also sent a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell to protest the decision of the United States to place Vietnam on its persecution watch list, according to a report in Nhan Dan, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

The foreign minister was reported to have complained that the State Department's report on the deteriorating human rights situation in Vietnam was based on "biased information" and was an "inaccurate reflection of Vietnam's actual situation."

Information has poured out of Vietnam since 2001 that ethnic minority or Montagnard Christians in the Central and Northwest Highlands of the country have endured severe persecution for holding church services in homes, acts that the government claims are subversive. Several ethnic minority Christians have been beaten to death for refusing to recant their faith and divulge the identities of other Christians.

As a result, Vietnam and six other countries, including North Korea, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, were named by the State Department Sept. 15 as being among the world's worst violators of religious freedom. Those countries were designated "countries of particular concern" under the the International Religious Freedom Act.

The Vietnamese government was cited specifically for failing to guarantee individual religious freedom for its citizens. While the country's constitution claims that "all religions are equal before the

law" and that "no one can violate freedom of belief and religion," religious freedom extends only so far as it supports "national unity," said the State Department report on Vietnam. The constitution claims that no person can "misuse beliefs or religions to contravene the law and State policies."

Those "policies" include restrictions on Protestant house churches among the ethnic minority Christians of the Central Highlands, the report said. The report also included descriptions of physical abuse at the hands of the Vietnamese army and police, torture and imprisonments, the confiscation of Bibles and the forced closure of house churches and other places of worship not registered with the government.

Many of the allegations regarded as credible in the report originated from sources both inside and outside Vietnam and have been confirmed by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees and Human Rights Watch (HRW), a New York-based advocacy group.

A common source of the stories of Christian persecution is Kok Ksor, leader of the Montagnard Foundation, an ethnic minority advocacy group based in South Carolina.

Ksor, for example, was the first to report that hundreds of ethnic minority tribesmen would stage a protest in favor of religious freedom and the reclamation of ancestral lands in the Central Highlands in April 2004. Ksor reported two days later that the protests had taken place and that Vietnamese police, or Cong An, had killed at least six ethnic minority tribesmen and as many as 20 had disappeared. Hundreds of Montagnards fled into Cambodia to escape capture. Some still remain in U.N. refugee camps while Cambodian police have sold others back to Vietnam.



FINDING A WAY — Despite continuing difficulties presented by government officials and other groups, some Christian businessmen continue to use their storefronts as opportunities for sharing Christ with customers. Others visit with fellow church members in order to witness to lost family members. (BP photo)

The Vietnamese government denied forcibly oppressing the largely Christian ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands until it finally issued a statement April 19, nine days after the protest blaming the violence in the region on Ksor and the Montagnard Foundation.

Two months later, the Vietnamese government claimed that Ksor was promoting a secessionist movement among the ethnic minorities. "He instigated his followers, the extremist elements in the Dak Lak and Gia Lai provinces to deceive, instigate and force local people to carry out violent demonstrations" with the goal of establishing a "Degar" state, a statement from Vietnam's embassy in Washington, D.C., said June 18.

Degar is a term used by the former members of an organization called FULRO (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races), a group of ethnic minority tribesmen who wanted a state separate from both South and North Vietnam as early as the 1960s. FULRO continued to fight the Vietnamese after the U.S. withdrew. The communist government that won the totality of Vietnam in 1975 has since viewed any organization closely associated with the ethnic minorities with suspicion.

The presence of followers of Ksor and the Montagnard Foundation in the Central

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Highlands may be complicating the situation for Christians in the area, according to the State Department's report. In addition to sidestepping government persecution, the State Department report revealed that some Degar nationalists had threatened Protestant pastors who found the group's mixture of politics and religion reprehensible.

The Degar movement suffered a blow in July when Ksor's half brother, Ksor Krok, was arrested in Cambodia and returned to Vietnam for a large bounty, according to the Montagnard Foundation. He was reportedly beaten and tortured in a prison in the city of Pleiku.

While the Degar political movement has caused the abuse of some ethnic minorities, persecution for solely religious reasons has intensified in Vietnam's mountainous regions and elsewhere in the country.

Despite the persecution in the Central and Northwest Highlands, the numbers of religious believers in the areas continue to grow, according to the State Department's report.

Looking back

10 years ago

Mississippi College's governing board of trustees, meeting on the school's Clinton campus, vote to immediately expand the board and begin selecting 75% of its own members in order to "distance" the school from "denominational politics."

20 years ago

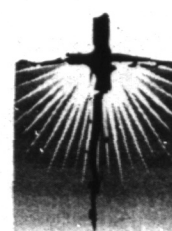
Washington Association members come to the rescue of storm-damaged First Church in Belmont, Calif., repairing the ventilation system and replacing plumbing in the baptistry of the small church.

50 years ago

Fifty thousand people attend the Eddie Martin revival crusade in Meridian. Over a three week period, over four hundred people respond to the invitation to receive Christ. More than 6,800 people were present for the closing night service.

Voter site available

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — In an effort to inform evangelical voters and contribute to the iVoteValues.com initiative, Baptist Press (BP) has launched an online election resource guide that includes information on registering to vote and on major issues facing the country. The website — www.bpnews.net/vote — includes information about the major candidates and parties positions on such issues as abortion, same-sex marriage and stem cell research. It also includes information about state ballot initiatives and a summary of important court cases that have been decided this year. Information about voter registration is included. The registration deadline in most states is in early October. The website is intended to contribute to the iVoteValues.com initiative, a voter-awareness and registration campaign to encourage voters to consider their values, not their pocketbook, when voting. Developed by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, it is also being promoted by Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council. In 2000, more than four million evangelicals who were registered did not vote in the presidential election. "Such political disengagement among Christians threatens to allow the destruction of the moral foundations of our country," reads a statement from the web site. "The following resources are offered to encourage Christians to participate in the 2004 elections and to equip them to make decisions and develop opinions that are informed from a perspective of faith."



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THE
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FRONT PAGE

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Justice Dept. joins MBHS legal action

JACKSON, Miss. (Special) — The U.S. Department of Justice has joined a "whistleblower" lawsuit alleging that entities of Mississippi Baptist Health Systems, Inc., headquartered in Jackson, illegally paid various physicians and physician groups for referring patients to the organization's health facilities.

The federal government believes submission of Medicaid claims from those referrals violated the civil False Claims Act, according to a Justice Department press release. The whistleblower lawsuit was filed by a former MBHS vice-president who was not identified by name in the press release.

MBHS spokesman Robby Channell said, "Baptist Health Systems believes the allegations in the so-called 'whistleblower' lawsuit are without merit and is disappointed that the Federal Government is joining some portions of that lawsuit. It is important to know that absolutely none of the allegations involve quality of patient care."

"Baptist will continue its cooperation with the government. Over the past 30 months Baptist has provided for the government's review a very large volume of management agreements, appraisals, contracts and cost reports — some dating back more than 12 years."

"Baptist anticipates being able to address and resolve the government's concerns. But if necessary, Baptist will vigorously defend itself in court."

No dollar amounts or court hearing dates were disclosed in either the Justice Department news release or Channell's statement.

WRITTEN IN THE SIDEWALK

I was out for an early morning walk in a town that was unfamiliar to me. As I walked along taking in the new sights of houses, buildings, flowers, and trees, from time to time I noticed on the sidewalks messages that had been scratched into the cement while it was wet. I noticed but paid little attention to them, but since I was going to be in the town a couple of days I saw them again and again and wondered what they meant. People seem to have an insatiable drive to leave some markings of their presence in a place or a desire to share a thought with the world. The more I thought about these thoughts the more thought provoking they became. Permit me to transfer some of these expressions from cement to ink.

One of the first ones to catch my attention was the largest one I saw with letters about a foot tall. It read, "Andy says life is good." I did not meet Andy in the few days I was there, but I appreciate him and I like his outlook on life. I wondered who actually wrote that in the concrete. My assumption is that Andy did though someone could have seen the sparkle in his eye, the bounce in his step, and the joy in his voice and written it on his behalf. Whether Andy or a friend wrote it, I wondered what happened in Andy's life that brought about this outburst of philosophizing on a sidewalk. Did Andy have a new job, was he getting married, was there a baby on the way, did he get a raise, had he just come back from war, or had he just finished successful cancer treatment? Or could it be that Andy had just met the living Lord and Jesus had ushered him into abundant living? We don't know, but we do know that "Andy says life is good."

Andy is the exception rather than the rule because as many of you can attest for every Andy writing in the concrete of life there are at least a dozen people who will quickly let you know that life is not good to them. They live on the verge of disaster and their disasters are of one strength and one measurement. They are indescrib-



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

ably terrible. It could be a flat tire or a fouled up computer, a hang nail or a heart attack, a cloudy day or the temperature is too cold, and all of life is certainly painted with a paint brush called bad.

Years ago I knew a man who after I got acquainted with him seemed to me as though he never, ever said anything good about people, or situations, or life in general. Although he was not aware of it, I started jotting down and keeping a little log of every time I talked with him just in an effort to try to catch him saying something good. Time after time I would jot down what he had to say and I begin to fill up page after page of bad things. I must say that he was an equal opportunity pessimist. Nothing escaped his view of things being in a mess — government, church, young people, senior adults, people in positions of leadership, and people on the street. For about two years I kept up the practice of jotting down how bad life was through the eyes of one man. I got tired of keeping the diary and so one day I just said to him, "Have you ever seen anything good?" He replied, "Why sure. There are lots of good things." I said, "Well I have never heard you say a good word about anybody or anything at any time." After a couple of seconds of somewhat stunned thoughtfulness he replied, "Well I look at life and see it as it really is." I said, "Oh!" I knew he was saying that as he saw it all of it looked bad. Maybe he should have known Andy. For whatever else was happening in the world something was going on in Andy's life that made him say, "Life is good."

A second writing that I would like to share with you caused me to stop and just stare and wonder at these modern-day cave drawings. Someone had written

in fairly large letters, "Jason loves ~~W~~." It appeared as though sometime back Jason was desperately in love with someone and something happened. The name that was scratched out or somewhat chiseled out had apparently been done a good while after the concrete had hardened. I wondered if Jason's love had left him, he had left her, or just what had happened between those two lovebirds. Something had happened and the name was removed. The reason I stopped and look at it for a while is that I was trying to figure out what name was there, but I was unable to discern any of the letters. All that was left was an indentation, a scar in the hardened sidewalk where somebody's name had been removed. While I did not know Jason or the girl, I have known the experience hundreds of times through the years. Love buds, blossoms, and comes into its full glory. I have seen so many joyful couples be united in marriage. It seems to be real, so meaningful and hopeful, but after years pass by something happens, something goes wrong and disruption, divorce, and destruction often take place. Only an indentation in life filled with hurtful memories is left. Although I do not know Jason and do not know whose name was removed I know that only the Lord can make life and love meaningful. Only the Lord can take the scars in our life and turn them into celebrations of redemption, renewal, and hope for the future.

I walked on and saw a similar but different cement sign. It was rather small and apparently had been put there by a woman. It said, "Kim loves Scott." It was clear, clean, well done, and still

intact. I looked around to see if there was a "Scott loves Kim" etching but did not see one. Still I was thankful for Kim and her expression of love and devotion to Scott. My hope was that she received the same expression that she gave. Anyone can love, but it takes two to have a loving relationship. Maybe the best understanding of this truth is seen in the Lord, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Unless we respond to Him in love the relationship remains one sided and is there by unfulfilled. At times it seems even empty. God loves everyone, but it is our contact with Him in Jesus Christ, our trust expression: "Whosoever believeth in Him," that brings about a relationship and that is also true in life.

Let me give you one last word from the sidewalk. It said, "Victor '95." At first glance I just thought it was someone who was named Victor and he had put his name in the walkway in 1995, but then I began to wonder. Maybe, possibly, hopefully someone had an experience with the Lord that brought victory and they became a victor in 1995. Wouldn't that be a good thing? I have seen people struggle with an issue or a sin that kept tearing them down and pulling them away from the Lord. Finally, gloriously they came to a moment of spiritual conquest in the power of Jesus and they become a victor. They find forgiveness, experience transformation, and come to know life with a lift that can only come from God. They could write on the pathway of life, "Victor!" In part that is actually the picture of the conclusion of life as each believer stands before the judgment seat of Christ and receives the victor's crown. As you continue on your journey today leaving impressions in the sidewalks of life, my prayer for you is that in Christ you will find experiences where you can say you are the victor.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

NOBTS bivo music class open for enrollment

October 18 begins the sixth of eight courses at eight locations in Mississippi sponsored by New Orleans Baptist Seminary.

The eight courses are: (1) Song Leading; (2) Worship Planning; (3) Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch; (4) Reading Music: Harmony/Melody; (5) Hymnology; (6) Music Administration/Staff Relations; (7) Survey of Music Resources; (8) Class Voice. These courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches.

The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a Church Music Certificate from New Orleans Seminary plus a credit of eight hours toward an on campus degree program. There is a one-time registration fee of

\$25.00. The cost of each course is \$100.00.

A \$50.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

The sixth course "Music Administration/Staff Relations" will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:

• **Broadmoor Baptist Church, Madison** — beginning October 18 (7-9 p.m.) Jimmy McCaleb, Teacher, (H) 601-924-1233.

• **Handsboro Baptist Church, Gulfport** — beginning October 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Louis White, Teacher, (C) 228-896-3796.

• **First Baptist Church, Booneville** — beginning October 18 (7-9 p.m.) LuAnne Ford, Teacher, (C) 662-728-6272.

• **Hernando Baptist Church, Hernando** — beginning October 18 (7-9 p.m.) Barry Tweedy, Teacher, (C) 662-429-6361.

• **Tri-County Baptist Associational Building, Columbia** — beginning October 19 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Kenny Adams, Teacher, (C) 601-876-3436.

• **Meadville Baptist Church, Meadville** — beginning October 19 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Chuck McMinn, Teacher, (C) 601-384-5215, (H) 601-384-3717.

• **Clarksdale Baptist Church, Clarksdale** — beginning October 18 (7-9 p.m.) Hugh Plunkett, Teacher, (C) 662-624-2538, (H) 662-627-3571.

• **Northcrest Baptist Church, Meridian** — beginning October 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.) Buddy McElroy, Teacher, (C) 601-681-6615, (H) 601-679-1887.

These classes could be offered at other locations in the state also, where 8-10 students are interested in enrolling.

For more information, contact Jimmy McCaleb at (601) 292-3273 or 1-800-748-1651 (ext. 273) or jmcaleb@www.nmbcb.org

Miss. vols aid Alabama, head to Florida

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP and local reports) — More than a week after Hurricane Ivan tore a path of destruction through several Alabama counties, numerous volunteers continue a relentless effort to help clean up and repair storm-ravaged areas. Several hundred Southern Baptists from more than a dozen states persist in their drive to restore some sense of normalcy to storm victims and the hardest-hit areas.

Members of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force wrapped up mass feeding responsibilities in Meridian on September 18 and headed to Orange Beach, Ala., to assist residents in that hard-hit area. The Task Force, which was also activated earlier for Hurricane Charley, was redeployed to Melbourne, Fla., on September 28 to assist victims of Hurricane Jeanne.

"In my lifetime, I have not witnessed such widespread devastation in our state," said Rick Lance, executive director-treasurer of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. "I want to commend the disaster relief workers from Alabama and around the country who have come to our rescue here in Alabama."

Lance, along with other state missions personnel, made an initial tour of areas such as Robertsdale, Atmore, Flomaton, and Brewton. At the Robertsdale site, Lance acted as a runner -- taking food to cars of waiting people after volunteer cooks had prepared the meals in a feeding unit supplied by the state convention.

"While I was serving food, I saw upscale SUVs and older cars all waiting in line for the same thing -- a hot meal and a helping hand," Lance said. "Crisis experiences like Hurricane Ivan are great equalizers. People of all backgrounds in terms of education, wealth and ethnicity are brought together in a sense of common need."

On returning to his office in Montgomery, Lance authorized his staff of state missionaries to participate in the feeding and cleanup efforts. "It is important for us to be 'hands-on' in response to this crisis," Lance told his staff. "Overnight arrangements will be primitive, so be prepared to take a sleeping bag and change of clothes as power is still out in most areas."

Lance also praised local Baptist officials, typically called directors of missions, who serve as the key leaders of Baptist associations in counties across south Alabama.

"These associational missionaries offer examples of Christian servanthood during this extraordinary time of need," Lance observed. "The people affected by this terrible weather are very grateful for the help provided by these leaders in their incarnational witness for Jesus Christ."

Due to the frequency and severity of the 2004 hurricane season -- which still has nearly two months to go -- the Task Force is accepting cash gifts through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board to defray the cost of the unit's multiple activations and to fund the on-site purchases of food supplies and other necessities. The Task Force is presently not accepting clothing, foodstuffs, or other items.

Fully 100% of gifts designated for the Task Force are used for specific, on-site disaster relief needs. Gifts to the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering and the Mississippi Cooperative Program provide the annual funding for the unit's maintenance, repair, administration, and training.



To make a tax-deductible gift toward Mississippi Baptists' disaster relief efforts, make checks payable to Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and designate "2004 Hurricane Relief" on the memo line. Mail to: Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, ATTN: Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. For more information of contributions, telephone (601) 292-3241 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 241. E-mail: dervin@mbcb.org.

For updates on the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force during the 2004 hurricane season, go to www.mbcb.org.

FOOD SERVICE — Vernon Botelot (left), a member of Briar Hill Church, Florence; Bobby Kennedy (center), a member of Pearl Valley Church, Wesson; and David Warren, a member of Eagle Lake Church, Vicksburg, strain green beans into an insulated food container on September 18 to be delivered to Meridian-area victims of Hurricane Ivan. After serving in Pascagoula, Meridian, and Orange Beach, Ala., during the Hurricane Ivan relief effort and earlier in Arcadia, Fla., during the Hurricane Charley relief effort, the Task Force was reactivated for Hurricane Jeanne and departed for Melbourne, Fla., on the morning of September 28. (BR photo by William Perkins)

Preaching giant Rogers to retire from pastorate

CORDOVA, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Adrian Rogers, one of the most prominent Southern Baptist preachers of his generation and a leader in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) conservative resurgence over the last 25 years, announced his retirement September 12 as pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Church.

The retirement of the former three-term SBC president is effective next spring, although a specific date has not yet been given. The goal is to have a new pastor in place when Rogers leaves. Making the announcement on his 73rd birthday, Rogers read a letter to the church, which has some 27,000 members.

"Now comes a time that we all knew would come when I should announce my retirement as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church," Rogers said in the statement that has since been posted on the church website. "Nevertheless, I will not retire from the ministry until I draw my last breath."

Health, Rogers said, "is not a factor" in the decision. He had triple bypass heart surgery March 16. "I thank

God for my recovery and growing vitality and hope for many good years ahead."

Upon retirement, Rogers said he plans on continuing the Love Worth Finding radio and television ministry. He also plans on ministering through the recently established Adrian Rogers Pastor Training Institute and teaching at Mid-America Seminary in Memphis. He will continue attending Bellevue Church.

"These and other opportunities will keep me challenged and busy," Rogers said. "I also plan to spend more quality time with my family."

Rogers was called as pastor of Bellevue Church in 1972, succeeding Ramsey Pollard, who had served as pastor since 1960. The church became a prominent SBC congregation under the leadership of R.G. Lee, who served as pastor from 1927-1960.

Rogers' election as SBC president in 1979 helped spark what is known as the conservative resurgence -- a period in which self-described conservatives challenged more moder-

ate elements within the convention in an effort to return the convention to what the conservatives described as its historical, orthodox roots and a commitment to biblical inerrancy.

After choosing not to run for re-election in 1980, Rogers was elected SBC president again in 1986 and 1987. The candidate with the backing of those conservatives has won the presidency every year since 1979.

In 1999-2000 Rogers served as chairman of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee, which revised Southern Baptists' statement of belief. It was adopted by the 2000 SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla.

Rogers' commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture has formed the core of his ministry. In his presidential sermon in 1980, Rogers told messengers, "In the [biblical] autographs, every sentence, word, line, point, pen stroke, jot or tittle was placed there by the purpose and will of God."

Rogers hopes to have his successor in place next spring. In his retirement announcement Sept. 12, he said that he would be "thrilled" to have the new pastor "ready to move onto the field before or at my last days as pastor."

"I would love to place the baton in his hand and bless his ministry with you," Rogers said.

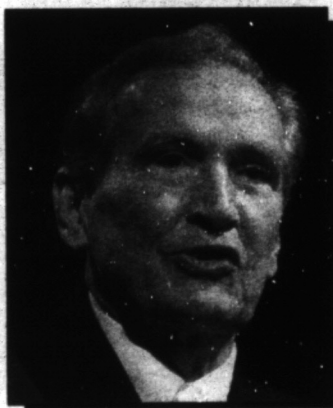
In the short-term, Rogers' Love Worth Finding radio and television ministry will continue. Long-term, though, a replacement -- particularly on television -- will have to be found.

"Right now, the thought is that whoever would succeed him at some point could be involved in the television ministry," Bill Skelton, executive vice president of Love Worth Finding Ministries, told Baptist Press. "... Any man that can keep 7,200 people awake on Sunday morning probably can do fairly well on media."

Any decision, Skelton said, would be made by the Love Worth Finding board. Love Worth Finding, which can be seen on more than 14,000 broadcast and cable television outlets and heard on nearly 2,000 radio stations and translators, was founded in 1987. The ministry is separate from the church.

Because television is "visual as well as audio," Skelton said, messages can become "somewhat dated." Once Rogers retires, the ministry will have a number of months of television messages that have yet to be aired, Skelton said.

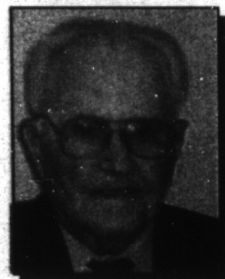
Even after retirement, Skelton said, Rogers could tape new messages in various venues -- preaching at crusades or at guest churches, or possibly preaching to the camera.



Rogers

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Louis Snider was recently presented a 40 year perfect attendance pin by Roger Crosswhite at Liberty Hill Church, Pope.



Snider

Members of the Potts Camp community held a prayerwalk for schools August 8.

They met at First Church then went to Potts Camp School and Mary Reid Elementary School. More than fifty participated.

The youth (pictured) of Holly Church, Corinth, enjoyed a Youth Rally, Jackson, and a water park this summer.

First Church, Potts Camp, and New Hope Church, Benton County, went on a mission trip to Henrietta, Okla.

They completed repairs and improvements to the Muscogee-Seminole-Wichita Baptist Association Assembly grounds. Ladies conducted VBS during the day and nightly services were held. Jim Buchanan is pastor of First Church and David Jordan is pastor of New Hope.

Holly Church, Corinth, recently held a deacon ordination and installation service. Pictured (from left) are Dean Goodwin, ordained; Tony Morrow, pastor; Hansford Huff, installed; and Robert Lee, ordained.

The children of Christ Church, Greenwood, presented the patriotic musical God Bless the USA recently. Pictured (from left) are Steve Hambrick, narrator, Owen Hambrick, Kegan Cunningham, Mary Upchurch, Haley Liddell, Kayla Narmour, Maggie Daves, Carlee Rae Thornburg, and Mauri Suggs.

The July mission project for the WMU of Unity Church, West, was to raise funds for the Pure Water, Pure Love program providing missionaries with water purification systems to meet their needs on the mission field. The Church staff filled their piggy banks as a fundraiser. Pictured from left are (kneeling) J.D. Hudson, (standing) Audean Gelston, Tom Cade, Gene Richardson, pastor, Steve White, J.D.



Unity Church Pure Water Mission Project, West



New Prospect Church, Olive Branch

Oakes, Jimmy Bruce, Chubby Melton, and Joy Oakes.

Feasel, Clay Sweatman, and James Dunlap.

New Prospect Church, Olive Branch, held a groundbreaking, Arise and Build, September 5 for their new 550 to expandable 800 seat sanctuary. Pictured (from left) are Mary Holden, Shirley Hanna, Susan McCulley, Kenny Dunlap, Pastor David Thomas, Scott Hanks, Larry Harris, Dale Gansman, Bob

The youth of Christ Church, Greenwood, recently attended the Passion Play in Eureka Springs, Ark. Pictured from left are (front) Mitch Taylor, Dalton Cummings, Lee Fondren, (middle) Kelton Long, Kegan Cunningham, Carlee Rae Thornburg, Melinda Thornburg, (back) Lanny Haley, pastor, Megan Cunningham, Brittany Avant, Matt Taylor, and Rachel Barnett.



Youth of Holly Church, Corinth



Potts Camp Church Prayer Walk, Potts Camp



Potts Camp & New Hope Mission Trip Participants



Dean Goodwin, Tony Morrow, Hansford Huff & Robert Lee



Christ Church Children's Musical, Greenwood



Youth of Christ Church, Greenwood

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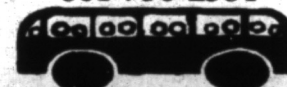
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JUST FOR THE RECORD



WMU of Unity Church, West



GAs & RAs of Mt. Zion Church, Columbus

The WMU of Unity Church, West, recently donated a wagon to LeBonheur Children's Hospital, Memphis, Tenn. Pictured (from left) are Elaine Cade, Audean Gelston, and Dewayne Cade.

Orleans, La. Pictured are Danyele Chance, Makayla Morgan, Alex Yeatman, and Gina Neal.

The 4th-6th grade Bible Drillers of Crossroads Church, Pelahatchie, were recently recognized. Pictured from left are (front) David Vaughn, Tiphani Craft, (middle) Amber Ensign, Ashley Johnson, Amy Bush, (back) Katrina Phillips, leader, and helpers Lynda Bush and Brandi Johnson. Ensign has completed 3 year with a superior rating.

The GAs and RAs of Mount Zion Church, Columbus, recently held Christmas in August. They collected school supplies for a local shelter.

The CIA of Crystal Springs Church at Dexter, Tylertown, were recognized recently with the pins they earned during the year. Pictured from left are (front) Caleb Ladner, Katherine Johnson, Sarah Alexander, (back) Jamie Magee, Katie Stringer, Charlotte Fortenberry, and Sarah Stogner.

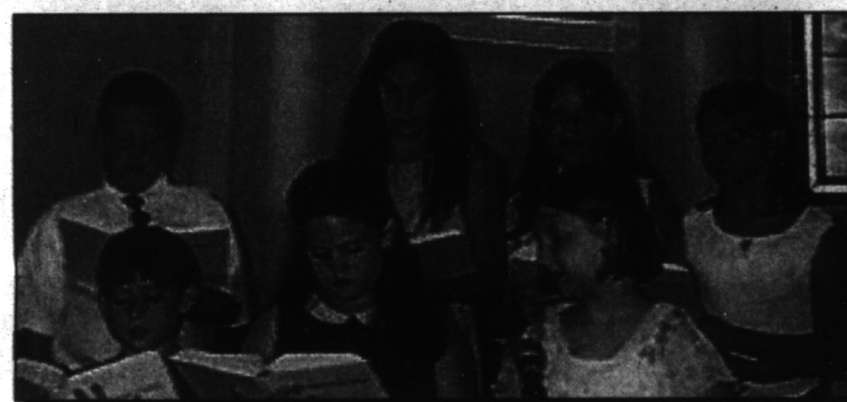
Ingalls Avenue Church, Pascagoula, has completed their 6th successful summer reading program with 39 children participating. The children read 2,016 books in 10 weeks during their summer vacation. Awards were given out August 29. Pictured are some of the participants. John Turner is pastor.



WOM of First Church, Calhoun City



Ingalls Avenue Summer Reading Participants, Pascagoula



CIA of Crystal Springs Church at Dexter, Tylertown



Crossroads Church Bible Drill Participants, Pelahatchie



GAs of Oakvale Church, Oakvale

Parkway Church, Pascagoula, gave a going to school shower for Leland Melton, a deaf child attending the Mississippi Deaf School, Jackson, for the first time. Pictured (from left) are Murphy D. Young, Renee Johnson, Leland Melton, and Rachel Rinks.

The WOM of First Church, Calhoun City, presented a church history skit, WOM the Past, Present, and Future, recently to celebrate the 100th birthday. Refreshments followed.

The GAs of Oakvale Church, Oakvale, collected hygiene items for their Christmas in August project which were delivered to the Brantley Baptist Center, a homeless shelter in New



Murphy Young, Renee Johnson, Leland Melton, and Rachel Rinks

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BAPTISTS

Coaltown Church, Purvis, will host The Providentials Quartet, Ruth, in concert October 3 at 6 p.m. Admission is free but a love offering will be taken. Jimmy Breazeale is pastor.

Poplar Springs Church, Mendenhall, will hold G3 Get 2 Gathering, a worship music resource, October 9 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., hosted by Jay Parker. Lunch will be provided. Call (601) 847-2555 if you would like to attend.

Morgantown Church, Natchez, celebrated their 50th Anniversary with a reception July 10. A worship service was

held July 11 with former pastors and music directors. Pictured are Talmadge Smith, W.J. Hughes, J.B. Betts, James Walters, and Edgar L. Wright, pastor.

First Church, Mathiston, participated in a Summer mission trip to Ephesus Church, Winchester, Ky., July 25-30. The 31 participants did roof work, built an addition with bathrooms, and conducted a Back Yard Bible Club.

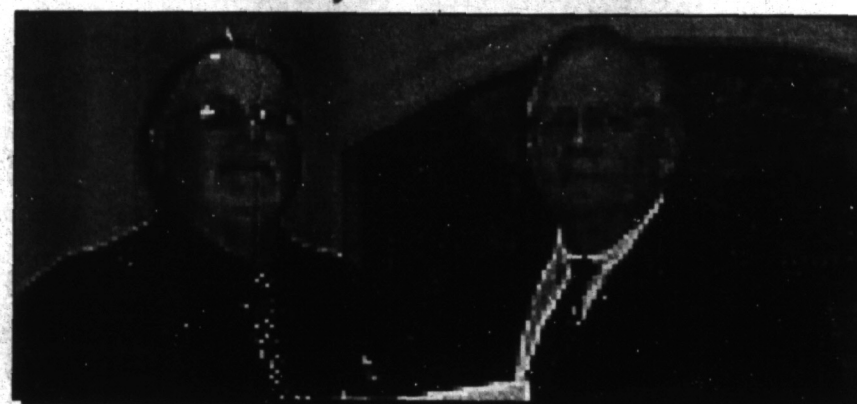
E.C. Gardner was ordained as a deacon at Heritage Heights Church, Laurel, August 8. Pictured (from left) are Ken Regan, pastor, Gardner, and his wife Gladys.

Plainway Church, Laurel, licensed Sam D. Hughes, Sr. to the ministry July 4. Hughes is available for Sunday supply and can be reached at (601) 428-8903 or (601) 426-6505. Pictured (from left) are Hughes, and J. Nonnie Jefcoat, pastor.

The Acteens of Evergreen Church, Louisville, enjoyed a time of recognition September 8 for completing Mission Quest 2003-04. They completed projects such as picking up trash, delivering dinner plates and fruit baskets, and having a carnival for the GAs. Courtney Partridge completed Mission Quest levels eighth to twelfth grade. Pictured from left (front) are Beth Papalambros, Charles Davis, Agnes Davis, Sarah Peebles, Jessica McDill, (back) Daphne Partridge, Anna Claire Peebles, Paige Papalambros, Courtney Holland, Ayla Vaughn, Partridge, and Wanda Reed.



Ken Regan, E.C. & Gladys Gardner



Sam Hughes and J. Nonnie Jefcoat



Acteens of Evergreen Church, Louisville



Talmadge Smith, W.J. Hughes, J.B. Betts, James Walters, and Edgar L. Wright



Mission Trip Participants of First Church, Mathiston

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Grays Creek, Hernando: Homecoming October 3; beginning at 10 a.m. with an old fashion dinner-on-the grounds; David Johns, instrumental and vocal performance, following.

Minter City, Minter City: 50th Homecoming October 3; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch will be served; music will follow; Bob O'Neal, preaching; The Promised Quartet, performing.

North Carrollton, North Carrollton: Revival October 3-6; Sunday, 11 a.m., dinner following, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon with lunch and 7 p.m.; Harold Danley, evangelist; visitors are welcome; Jeff Myers, pastor.

Holly Springs, Foxworth: Homecoming October 10; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11; dinner on the grounds; afternoon singing following; Dee DeBord, Monticello, guest speaker; Midnight Cry, Brookhaven, singing.

Macedonia, Brookhaven: Homecoming October 3; Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; covered dish luncheon following; Calvin Phelps, guest pastor.

Cairo, Ecu: Revival October 3-6; Campers On Mission conducting the services; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. with fellowship meal following; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; W.G. "Bill" Dowdy, pastor.

Lucien, Lucien: Revival October 17-20; Sunday, 11 a.m.; nightly at 7 p.m.; Wayne Moak, preaching; Jerry Peagler, music director.

Mt. Zion, Eupora: 125th Anniversary October 10; worship, 10:45 a.m.; a fellowship meal will follow; song service, 1:30 p.m.; all are welcome.

First, Isola: Centennial October 3; worship, 10:30 a.m.; lunch will be served; afternoon service will follow; Bob Maddux, former pastor, preaching; Adrian Crawford McKinley, former music minister, directing music; Marsha DePriest, former music minister and pianist, playing.

Tishomingo Chapel, Alcorn County: Revival October 3-6; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Kenny Digby, preaching; Lynn Prather, pastor.

Crooked Creek, Silver Creek: Revival October 10-15; Sunday, 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and a covered dish lunch will be served; Mon.-Fri., a covered dish meal will be served at 6 p.m., and 7 p.m.; Larry Romack, preaching; Mike Britt, music.

Providence, Hattiesburg: Homecoming October 3; worship, 10 a.m.; dinner on the grounds will follow.

West McComb, McComb: 50th Anniversary November 14; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner will be served at noon.

Temple, Moss Point: Revival October 3-6; Sunday, 11 a.m., dinner on the grounds following, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; James Messer, evangelist; Ronnie Cottingham, music; nursery provided.

McClellan Road, Biloxi: Homecoming October 3; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner at noon; singing, 1 p.m.; Breaux Tagueant, former pastor, guest speaker; Railroad Creek and the Victory Singers, singing; all are invited; Kenna Byrd, pastor; for more information, call (228) 497-3850.

WWW.MBCB.ORG

Highland, Vicksburg: 50th Anniversary October 2-3; Sat., fish fry at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and a covered dish luncheon will be served; James Messer and Len Turner, former pastors, leading worship; Brian Ivey, pastor.

Myrick, Laurel: Revival October 3-6; Sunday, 10:15 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Gene Douglas, evangelist; Tim Nelson, music; Jackie Spell, pastor.

New Goodhope, Pulaski: Homecoming October 10; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner will follow; John Clifton Purvis, pastor, speaking; Curtis and LaNita Roland, music.

Sunrise, Leake County: Revival October 10-13; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jerry Lundy, evangelist; David Addy, pastor.

Kreole, Moss Point: Revival October 3-7; Sunday, 10:30 a.m.,

dinner on the grounds following, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 7 p.m.; Terry Long, Lily Orchard, Moss Point, revival leader; Don Womble, pastor; for more information, call (228) 475-1306.

New Hope, Walnut Grove: Homecoming and Revival October 10-13; Sunday, 10 a.m., dinner on the grounds following, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Moore and Mark Mayo, guest speakers.

Harrisville, Harrisville: Homecoming October 10; worship, 10 a.m.; dinner, 11:30 a.m.; singing, 12:30 p.m.; ; Dennis Allen, Baker, La., guest speaker; Raymond Ball, Ridgeland, guest singer; Betty Sapp, Florence, guest pianist.

Mt. Pisgah, Enid: Homecoming October 10; music, 10:30 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; dinner at noon; music, 1:30 p.m.; Second Chance, Holcomb, music; Johnny Spencer, speaking; Marty Evans, Jr., pastor.

William Carey College in cooperation with Southeast Mississippi Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality will host an Environmental Education Curriculum Workshop October 14, Thomas Business Building, Kresge Room, Hattiesburg campus, from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Registration begins at 9 a.m. For reservations, contact (601) 318-6140 e-mail junehornsby@wmcarey.edu by October 7.

David Wharton, director of documentary projects for the Center for the Study of

Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, unveiled his collection of black and white photographs entitled **Blue Mountain — A Community Portrait** on September 17. The 40 picture exhibit is on display at BMC's Paschal Student Union Building through October 7. For more information about the exhibit, call (662) 685-4771 (ext. 118).

The William Carey College FCA will hold the Second Annual 5k Catch Me If You Can Run/Walk October 2 at 8 a.m., Hattiesburg campus. The race is sponsored by the Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi on Campus. Registration forms are available at www.pinebeltpacers.org. Race day registration begins at 7:30 a.m. in the Missions Plaza. For more information, call (601) 318-6350 or (601) 318-6444.

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DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS, THE SHELBY Baptist Association, Memphis, Tennessee is prayerfully accepting resumes for the position of Director of missions. To lead an association of approximately 140 churches, missions, and preaching points. Send resumes to Wade Taylor, c/o Kensington Baptist Church, 4945 Winchester Road, Memphis, TN 38118.

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MAIN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, Goodman, Miss., is currently seeking a full-time pastor. A traditional SBC, resident membership 95. Send resumes or contact to Main Street Baptist Church, pastor search committee, Billy May, chairman, P.O. Box 206, Goodman, MS 39079.

CHURCH PIANIST NEEDED, Grandview Baptist Church, 900 South Pearson Rd., Pearl, Miss. 39208. Wednesdays 7:30 - 8:30 pm and Sundays 10:30 am - 11:30 am and 6:30 pm. \$100 per week. Please contact Mike Hennington at (601) 624-9389 or call the church office at (601) 939-4215.

The Christian Action Commission (CAC) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Rendering Ministries will host pastors, staff, and concerned lay people for a seminar on November 11 entitled, **Daycare Dilemmas: Legal Issues Affecting Church Daycares**. There is no charge for the seminar.

Attorney and Minister Jeff Rimes of Wells, Marble, and Hurst Law Firm in Jackson will be leading the seminar. Rimes is president of a non-profit legal consulting group called Rendering Ministries that offers its services to churches at free or reduced charges.

The seminar will begin at 10 a.m. in the Sky Room of the Baptist Building in Jackson, and will end at noon. Those attending the seminar will have the option for Dutch treat lunch at a local restaurant.

Registration is required in order to plan adequately for materials. To register or for more information, contact Rita Wood at CAC, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. E-mail: rwood@christianaction.com.

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, Pascagoula, Miss., is accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music and youth. Must be willing to work in both areas of ministry and be able to work with choirs. Resumes can be sent to P.O. Box 2278, Pascagoula, MS 39569. Or can be emailed to pastorjohnny@bellsouth.net. Anyone with questions call (228) 762-1338.

THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION is seeking qualified applicants for an accounting position(s). Accounting degree and trust accounting experience preferred. Please send resume, complete with references, salary history, and pastor's recommendation, to: MBF personnel administration, Post Office 530, Jackson, MS 39025. Please visit our web site at www.msbaptistfoundation.org for more information about the Foundation.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

ANNIVERSARY PLANNED

Editor:

First Church of West Point will be celebrating its 150-year anniversary next June. We plan to have a Pastors' Photo Gallery as part of this. If you are a former pastor or family member, please contact the church at P.O. Box 794, West Point, MS 39773. Telephone: (662) 494-4213. Web site: www.fbcwp.com.

Louise H. Hill
West Point

STUDENTS SOUGHT

Editor:

Are there students from your state who will be enrolling in one of the many universities in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont)? The Baptist Convention of New England serves these six states and has ministry on many of the campuses. We would also like to make available a list of area churches.

On most campuses we do not have access to a religious preference list and therefore we have no way of knowing Southern Baptist students enrolled. We need persons in the churches of your state to help us contact them. If any of your readers have family, friends, or fellow church members who are coming to college in New England, we would like to know who they are and how to contact them. Please send information to:

Collegiate Ministries
Baptist Convention
of New England
87 Lincoln Street
Northborough, MA 01532
(508) 393-6013
johndma@aol.com

We will ensure that someone is in touch with them immediately. Thank you, and remember to pray for collegiate ministries in this area.

John Ramirez
Dir. of College Ministry
Northborough, MA

AFA: SBC FRIEND

Editor:

Recently The Baptist Record ran an article concerning American Family Association (AFA) which appeared in Agape Press, the print division of AFA News. The article concerned an investment in Carnival Cruise Lines by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Annuity Board (AB). The BP article said, "The concerns (about the investment) arose after AFA recently used its Agape Press news service and its American Family Radio network to spotlight AB holdings in Carnival Cruise Lines. Southern Baptists have sometimes been the object of criticism from AFA, which is an independent Christian organization, and its affiliates."

When shown the article, I was at a loss to recall any time the AFA had criticized the SBC. Finally, I learned what was referenced. Some years ago the First Baptist Church of Gulfport sold some property to a casino. The manager of our radio station in Gulfport, speaking for himself and not for AFA, was critical of the sale.

Let me say that AFA did not criticize the sale of the church property. I can't remember a single time AFA has ever criticized the SBC. I know that many, many times AFA has praised the SBC. In fact, I have said often and in public that the SBC has led the way in dealing with the moral issues of today.

One other thing. The article carried by Agape Press was taken verbatim from Associated Press and identified as being from Associated Press. AFA did not say a single word about the AB or SBC. Don Wildmon, chairman American Family Assoc. Tupelo

One other thing. The article carried by Agape Press was taken verbatim from Associated Press and identified as being from Associated Press. AFA did not say a single word about the AB or SBC. Don Wildmon, chairman American Family Assoc. Tupelo

Don Wildmon, chairman
American Family Assoc.
Tupelo

JUST SAY NO!

Editor:

Carnival Cruise Lines should advertise on their web site the dates for the "Gay Cruise," even if they say only ten percent of the cruise is booked by homosexuals. What about families, Christian or not, who are around pool areas, etc., and are subjected to behavior that is common with homosexuals?

We as Christians sit back in church and are brainwashed to tolerate this behavior and many other issues. When Jesus overturned the tables in the Temple, was he being tolerant? No!

We as believers need to stand up and say "No!" to any monies supporting homosexual activities — even 401(K) accounts.

Clyde Ellzey
Byhalia

CLOUD OF PESSIMISM

Editor:

I am not a pessimist by nature, but a dark cloud of pessimism concerning the Southern Baptist Convention and its future has of late permeated my thoughts. I am fearful that we have reached our apex and a downward movement has already begun.

We see this occurring as large groups of Southern Baptists have withdrawn from our convention. We have also recently withdrawn from another group. Growth is reported as stagnant.

There is a difference in theology and never the twain shall meet. Our denomination is considered too strict in our

doctrines and beliefs by many, as evidenced by those who have left. Many do not understand nor will accept our opposition to adultery, abortion, same sex marriage, gambling, women pastors and deacons, alcohol, drugs, premarital sex, pornography, and divorce, to name a few.

Can we compromise on the biblical truth that we as Southern Baptists have historically held to be the very Word of God? In my opinion to take this route for the sake of big numbers or for any other reason, is a sure and certain road to disaster and the end of Southern Baptists as we have always known them.

Haskel Stringer
Bay Springs

CLINTON ATTACKED

Editor:

I see where you have again attacked Bill Clinton. You called him a serial adulterer and liar in The Baptist Record as well as other things you said about him. This is one of the many attacks you have made about him and the Democratic Party in The Baptist Record over the years since you have been the editor. I did not know a Baptist paper owned by the people was to be used to promote your political party and views.

Since you called him a serial adulterer, I wonder what you call the people in Southern Baptist churches who are living in adultery. I'm talking about those in our churches who have two or three living husbands or wives. Many of these people are in leadership roles. You also called Bill Clinton a liar. We now have a liar called Bush living in The White House. He lied to the American people so he could get us in a war of his choice. We now know it was all based on lies.

You probably did not know any woman who uses birth control pills is using a form of abortion. I could tell you many more things. I have voted Democratic many years before you were probably born. The values question is in the eyes of the beholder. To your surprise, I am a Christian.

O. Richardson
Winona

SEARCH FOR GOD

Editor:

If one is hungry for Jehovah God, one only has to look for His Son, Jesus Christ. He is not that difficult to find! Jesus Christ can be found throughout the 66 books that are contained within one covering. Those who have searched for God Jehovah and found Him within these pages call it the Bible.

Not only is God Jehovah there, but also one can learn about the beginning and hunger as well as the end of hunger. No special effects, no

synthesizers, no acoustics, nothing complex, no licenses, no permits, no additional aids are required — just a hunger for God.

It is surprising to some, but many have found Him without the aid of any physical apparatus. Jehovah God has been found by some who were alone in a hotel room, on the banks of a river, in a fox-hole, an empty house, alone with a weapon of destruction, in a busy shopping mall, and believe it or not in a church building.

On the journey through the Bible seeking to satisfy individual hunger, you may have the opportunity to meet people from any areas like the woman from Endor, Demetrius the silversmith, Simon of Samaria, Mary Magdalene, the blind man, the woman at Jacob's Well, and many others who were hungry and were fed the bread of life as well as by living water. Some did eat and some did not. It is not that we can't find Jehovah God; it is that we stop searching.

Charlie Emerson
Ocean Springs

TRAGEDY, OR COMEDY?

Editor:

Tragedy and comedy are the two extremes in the human emotional experience. If it were not so tragic, the confusion surrounding homosexual marriage would be comical. To define the union of same gender couples as traditional matrimony is so ridiculous as to laughable. Surely God must hold them in derision (Psalm 2:4).

However, we must look at this in its true light which is, of course, just another of Satan's strategies to draw our attention away from our main course. Winning others to Christ and teaching them the truths necessary for their spiritual growth and service is the purpose of the church.

As much as we would like to subdue evil in the world, that is not our mission. When hearts are changed, society will be influenced in a godly manner. For hearts to be changed, Christ must be introduced and received in the hearts of unbelievers.

Let us not lose our direction by yielding to Satan's ploy. Only as we steadfastly focus on spreading the Gospel and bringing others to Christ can we fulfill the Great Commission entrusted to us.

Scripture tells us that God has given these people over to a reprobate mind to do those things who are not convenient (Romans 1:28). Only He can call them to repentance.

As we pray, let us remember even these who have gone so far astray and seek their redemption.

Martha L. Carpenter
Memphis

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Showing Love

Luke 7:36-50

By Geneva England

Without Christ indwelling our souls, we carry the depraved Adamic sin nature. Yet when we accept Christ by faith, we are born again by the Holy Spirit, and we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. We henceforth experience an inner change that motivates us to pattern our lives after the loving, sinless life of Christ. We grieve over our sinfulness and desire to conform our lifestyles to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Two stories from Luke provide us with examples of love and gratitude in action.

I. LOVE EXPRESSED (LUKE 7:36-38)

When a sinful woman from the Capernaum area entered the house of a self-righteous Pharisee in order to display her deep love for Jesus Christ, she took a bold risk. But her love for Christ propelled her actions to enter, anoint

Christ's feet with precious perfume, weep over her sinful condition, kiss His feet, and wipe them with her hair. She did this not once, but many times while He inclined at the table with His feet extended away from the table. The sinful woman humbly ministered to Jesus through the lowliest of tasks—washing His feet. [Theologians differ on whether this is the same woman as in Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8.]

Further, by "anointing" (v. 38) Jesus' feet, the woman was engaging in an Old Testament practice, meaning "to set apart." In those times, priests and kings were ceremonially anointed as a sign of their official position. Hence, the anointing of Jesus' feet symbolized that He was being "set apart": He possesses God's power and embodies both king and priest.



England

Simon's Pharisaical sect believed law keeping was necessary for salvation, having "rejected the counsel of God...being not baptized by [John]" (v. 30). Largely, they were so self-righteous that they tended to despise and condemn everyone else as sinners, not worthy of salvation. Therein, we understand why this sinful woman was acting very boldly to intrude into this Pharisee's house.

III. LOVE COMMENDED (LUKE 7:47-50)

Do not confuse this immoral woman's contrite and loving actions as the price she paid for salvation. No! Verses 47 and 49 clearly affirm other Bible verses—that Christ forgives sins based on faith, not based on works (Eph. 2:8-9). We learn from her action

that Christ is pleased with our expressions of love to Him.

How may we show our love for Christ more boldly? First, let's review one of the Bible's love chapters: John 14. Verses 15, 21, and 23 explain that the person who loves God will keep His commandments. This is in compliance with the first four of the Ten Commandments. Jesus commands us to love God completely—heart, soul, strength, and mind—and, secondly, to love our neighbors as ourselves (Lk. 10:27).

To know the Lord better, to love Him completely, utterly, we must hold back nothing of ourselves. We should examine ourselves daily to determine if we are demonstrating the Christian love that separates believers from the lustful, self-serving world—the one championed through most of the media.

Another point in this lesson text is that God uses circumstances to accomplish His plan. This sinful woman might have missed the opportunity to express her gratitude and love had not Christ been invited to dine with this particular Pharisee. She, no doubt, had heard the news of Jesus' visit

with Simon because Jesus had already healed many and even raised the dead son of the widow in that area. Thus, she unashamedly took a bold step.

Furthermore, Jesus taught Simon a lesson through a parable about a moneylender and two borrowers. One owed 200 denari [approximately 200 days' wages]; the other owed approximately 50 day's worth. The moneylender canceled both debts. Indeed, both debtors would be grateful for the forgiveness of their indebtedness, but Christ's question to Simon was which one would love the lender more.

Simon, being astute about money matters, replied the one with the largest debt. Human nature dictates that answer, which Jesus acknowledged as the correct one. Then He applied the principle to the sinful woman who had anointed His feet. She, too, would love Him more because of her great sinfulness. We learn from these accounts that Christ is pleased when we express our deep love for Him.

England is a member of First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Follow Jesus

Luke 5:1-39

By James Walters

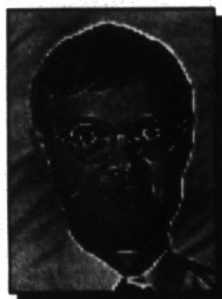
We can be grateful that God accepts us just as we are. No doubt He will cleanse us and transform us, making us better than we ever could be on our own. Many of us come from backgrounds we are delighted to be free of. We would never go back. Do we need reminding that there is yet a world of lost people living as virtual outcasts like ourselves once? Not a single person may be representing God to them. Maybe nobody wants them. Perhaps their occupation is dishonorable, or they live on the wrong side of the tracks. I was once in that number, and perhaps, we all were. Christ has given His example to follow to reach everyone, and to invite all to follow Him.

GOING WHERE JESUS GOES (LUKE 5:1-3)

Jesus was speaking to a

crowd near the Sea of Galilee on one occasion. The crowd had grown so large He was having trouble addressing them all. Jesus stepped into Peter's boat and was rowed a few yards from the shore. Christ continued speaking to the people from the boat. On that occasion Jesus was among people His society had written off. He built relationships with those who were not believed would amount to much.

Where would God go today if He came to Earth to speak to us? Would He stand in our State Legislature in Jackson and address us? Would He appear before Congress in Washington and speak to us from there, or perhaps before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York? What an audience He would have if He chose any of those groups. Surely this sort of question was pondered two thousand years ago.



Walters

Jesus said relatively nothing to the authorities or the political establishment. He never told Pilate "Follow me." He didn't intentionally go to the High Priests and invite them to be His disciples. He would not have hindered any from following him, and a few did, yet His energies were spent among the lowly.

DOING WHAT JESUS SAYS (LUKE 5:4-11)

Peter and his fellow fishermen were told to go back into the sea and let down their nets. Perhaps we can sense the hesitancy in Peter's voice when he told Jesus they had been fishing all night with no results. The fishermen caught so many fish on their return trip, however, their nets broke and their ships were nearly sinking from the abundance of their catch. Had they followed their own intuition the miracle would not have occurred. "Follow me," Jesus demanded. From that moment on the fishermen became fishers of men.

Levi was a tax farmer. He had bid the highest amount in

tax revenue and was awarded the contract for that district. Rome was only concerned Levi meet his bid. However great a percentage more he collected was of no concern to Rome. They simply looked the other way. Tax farmers always gathered more than their bid.

Since Levi was a Jew, he was hated. His profession was engaged in legalized extortion from his own people. Without much introduction to His encounter Jesus saw Levi and told him to follow Him. Levi left his high paying job and became a disciple. With Levi and the fishermen disciples there was a committed step forward into the purposes of God. The first step toward keeping a commitment to Christ is always to make a commitment to Christ.

ACCEPT THOSE JESUS ACCEPTS (LUKE 5:29-3)

Levi threw a party for Jesus, and invited all his friends. His friends were tax farmers too. Jesus went to Levi's banquet. Christ's critics faulted Him with essentially approving Levi's way of life. "Sick people need a physician," Jesus answered, "I've

come to call the sinful to repentance, not the righteous.

Has anyone not noticed that in relief efforts abroad hungry people don't complain about the menu? Full people are picky, choosy. "Not enough salt! Too much pepper!" Hungry people have appetites and are usually grateful for the chance to eat. Christ came to feed the hungry. Those without appetites involved themselves in criticism of the diet. Hungry fishermen and tax collectors sat at Jesus' table, and enjoyed the meal. Outsiders, who didn't want Jesus' food anyway, were bothered by who sat at the table.

The story is told of a turn of the Twentieth Century evangelist whose somewhat unorthodox methods of evangelism were drawing fire. The city's massive population was going unreached by orthodox methods. Church attendance was dropping. "We don't like your way of reaching people," some upset ministers told him. The response was classic. "I prefer my way of doing it to your way of not doing it."

Walters is member of Temple Church, Hattiesburg.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph

attachments are permissible. Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number. Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, buildings, or other photographs will be printed. News and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to: Baptist Record, P.O. Box 100, Hattiesburg, MS 39405-0100. FAX: 601/551-1000. E-mail: baptistrecord@baptist.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Messenger cards ready for mailout

Messenger cards for the 169th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) on October 26-27 at First Church, Jackson, will be mailed directly to churches during the week of October 11. Each church will receive the number of cards for which they are eligible according to the guidelines of the MBC Constitution, which states:

Each church in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and having contributed to world missions through the Cooperative Program during the preceding convention year shall be entitled to two messengers for the first one hundred members of its membership or fraction thereof.

One additional messenger from each church shall be allowed for each additional one hundred members, or major fraction thereof, but no church shall be entitled to more than ten messengers.

Membership information is based on the 2003 Annual Church Profile. For more information, contact Brenda Box in the Executive Director's Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: bbbox@mbcb.org.

Bibliocipher

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HZXVAF ND XYCFQ YCF
ND SZZJ; JXYJ PJ PQ P
NDQZAS: XYCFAZ NZ,
YCF QZZ; SVG Y QOPGPI
XYJX CVJ SAZQX YCF
HVCZQ, YQ DZ QZZ NZ
XYBZ.

AKMZ JTZCJD-SVKG:
JXPGJD-CPCZ

Clue: S = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 4:8

Land: marriage is 'basic building block'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — "We are locked in a struggle to defend the basic building block of society," Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) President Richard Land said of marriage when he addressed the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee Sept. 21.

"The legalization of same-sex 'marriages' would be a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions for America's children," Land warned, recounting that the battle intensified when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage in that state.

The illegitimacy rate in some Scandinavian countries is above 80% because men and women are cohabiting instead of marrying, Land noted. In European countries when same-sex partners are allowed to marry, he continued, the divorce rate is higher for homosexual and lesbian couples than for those in traditional marriages and there has been a steep decline in the number of heterosexual marriages.

There is no question that fathers and mothers in monogamous marital relationships are fundamental for properly raising children, Land said. "You can't expand the definition of marriage," he said. "You can only shatter it."

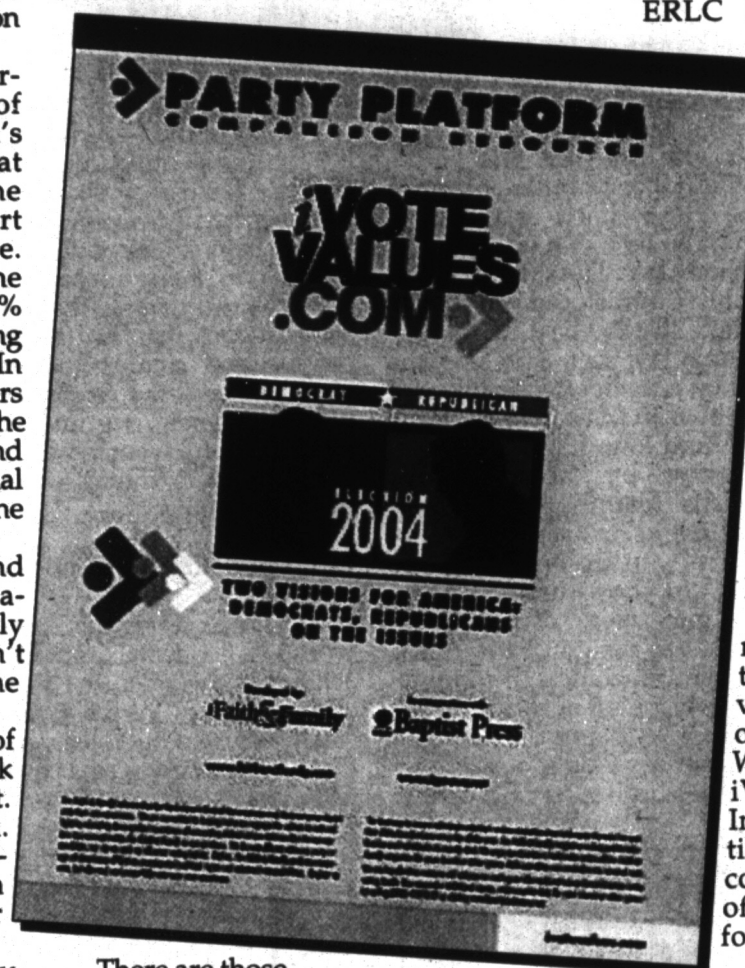
Land went on to say the legalization of same-sex "marriage" would portend dark days ahead for the U.S. government. "Democracy itself is at stake," he said. "Are we to be a government of the people, by the people and for the people, or a government of judges, by judges and for judges?" he asked.

When American voters have an opportunity to speak out on this issue, they speak out resoundingly in favor of traditional marriage, he said, noting in all seven of the states that have voted on the issue, citizens have overwhelmingly supported marriage as only between one man and one woman.

Even a majority of Californians gave God's design for marriage the thumbs up, Land said, noting the issue carried every demographic in the state except 18-24-year-olds, voicing a cause for concern: This age group's support of a broader definition of marriage

could be directly attributed to "compulsory, homosexual-friendly sex education."

"It's time we took back our schools," he said to much applause from the Executive Committee audience.



There are those who say the Constitution is a sacred document in the nation's history and it should not be amended to reflect marriage as the union of only one man and one woman, Land pointed out.

They are wrong, he continued. "The Bible is the most sacred document in our country's history," he said. "If we can amend the Constitution to regulate congressional pay raises, as was done in the most recent amendment, then we surely can amend the Constitution to make cer-

tain marriage in our nation is only between one man and one woman."

This is one reason why this election is the most crucial election in his lifetime, Land said, and that is the reason the ERLC launched the iVoteValues.com voter registration and awareness effort earlier this year.

The aim of the iVoteValues initiative, Land explained, is to get people registered, to encourage them to be informed about the candidates and the issues and then to "vote their values, their beliefs and their convictions."

You can't vote if you're not registered, Land said. "It is a disgrace that some 30% of Southern Baptists are not even registered to vote."

With more than four million visitors to the two iVoteValues websites, Land said the initiative's reach has been extended through a partnership with Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council.

"We have seen phenomenal results and tremendous receptivity" and people are registering to vote, Land said, reporting a tally of at least 15,000 people on the Web and at the locations where the iVoteValues.com Mobile Information Center and Registration Rig has visited on its cross-country tour. Land added that tens of thousands of voter registration forms have been distributed.

Another element of the initiative, a political party platform comparison resource, has been released. The eight-page, full-color mini-magazine lays out specific proposals and pledges made by the two major political parties in their platforms.

Land noted the ERLC has gone to great efforts to ensure the iVoteValues voter registration and awareness effort is nonpartisan and in compliance with the requirements for 501(c)(3) organizations, such as churches.

For more information on the mini-magazine and iVoteValues, go to www.erlc.com.

Baylor president barely escapes resignation demand

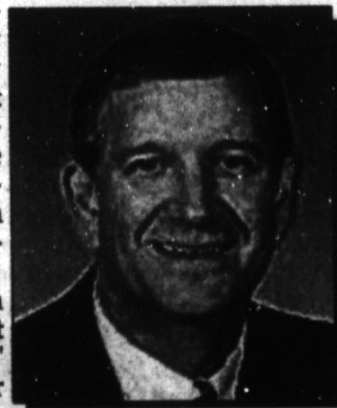
WACO, Texas (ABP) — Baylor University regents voted to postpone indefinitely a call for President Robert Sloan's resignation, and they unanimously rejected a request by the university's faculty senate to hold a faculty-wide referendum on Sloan's administration.

After a motion was introduced at the Sept. 24 regents' meeting calling for Sloan's resignation, a second motion called for the matter to be postponed indefinitely, chairman Will Davis announced after the executive session. "It does not kill the idea for ever and ever. It can be brought up at another time," he said. Davis declined to reveal the vote margin on the motion to postpone, but one regent characterized it as "very close."

The motion to postpone a call for resignation was the latest in a series of votes by

regents on Sloan's leadership. The board voted 31-4 in September 2003 to affirm Sloan, but his support had eroded by spring, and at the board's May meeting, a motion to ask for Sloan's resignation failed by an 18-17 secret ballot. Regents took no vote on Sloan's presidency at their July retreat, other than unanimously affirming the Baylor 2012 10-year plan that has become the controversial centerpiece of his administration.

While Davis described the Sept. 24 meeting as "collegial," a regent said the mood was "very tense." A majority of the board members expressed their views during extended discussion of Sloan's leadership, he added. Twice in a little more than a year, the university's faculty senate passed votes of no confidence in Sloan's leadership.



Sloan

At a recent retreat, the group voted 29-1 to call for an independently administered secret-ballot survey asking all university faculty whether they believe Sloan should remain as Baylor's president. Davis said the regents unanimously turned down that request and he personally did not believe it was appropriate to put the issue to "some kind of popularity contest."

The regents' vote came the same day Baylor started parents' weekend and dedicated a \$103 million science building. The 508,000-square-foot facility consolidates the chemistry, biology, geology, physics and neurology programs under one roof, along with most of the university's pre-professional healthcare programs and five multidisciplinary research centers.

New facilities have been a key component of Baylor 2012, Sloan's 10-year vision for making Baylor a top-tier university, but capital expansion at the university, coupled with unprecedented levels of debt,

during Sloan's tenure as president have raised the ire of his critics. They also faulted him for increasing tuition, failing to foster good relationships with alumni and faculty, and imposing more narrow religious restrictions on faculty.

Prior to the regents meeting, 22 former Baylor regents submitted a resolution calling for the current board to replace Sloan immediately with an interim leader and initiate a nationwide presidential search.

The resolution accused Sloan of creating "the greatest divisiveness and distrust in the history of Baylor."

Following the Sept. 24 regents meeting, trustee John Baugh of Houston, Texas, said he felt university leaders were "still bogged down."

Sloan, 55, is a Texas native graduate of Baylor, Princeton Seminary in New Jersey, and the University of Basel in Switzerland. Before assuming the Baylor presidency in 1995, he was dean of Baylor's Truett Seminary in Waco.